

**MEA's fiscal mess**

2082. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "MEA's fiscal mess costs the country Rs. 140 crore" as reported in the Indian Express dated 20th May, 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what steps are being taken to compensate the loss to the exchequer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Sir, we have seen the news item. It is generally based on C.A.G. report submitted to the P.A.C. which contains some paras pertaining to Ministry of External Affairs, which are at present under consideration of P.A.C.

(c) Appropriate action, as per rules, will be taken after studying the Report.

**Boosting bilateral trade with Russia**

2083. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India have finalised with Russia an action plan to step up economic cooperation including establishment of a transport corridor linking Mumbai with the Southern Russian port of Astrakhan to boost bilateral trade;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the transport corridor through Iran would considerably cut short the time for transportation- of goods from India to Russia;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) to what extent the trade potentials between the two countries would increase?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) During the visit of the External Affairs Minister to the Russian Federation in June 2000, India and the Russian Federation mutually agreed on an